

January 2006

Rep. Betty McCollum Travels To Africa

Rep. Betty McCollum Visits Africa on AIDS Day

Betty McCollum just came back from Africa where she attended an Aids Day event in Malawi. McCollum also visited the maternity ward of Mwanza District Hospital with the Hon. Davies Katsonga, Malawi's Foreign Minister. McCollum has made maternal health and child survival a priority in Congress and is the author of the Child and Newborn Act (HR 4222) to expand child survival and maternal health support in developing countries. Malawi has one of the world's highest rates of maternal death and under-five mortality.

At the end of last year Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) announced the introduction



Photo courtesy of Rep. McCollum

Rep. Betty McCollum walking with Julia Mbewe and her family visiting the maize fields in Madzimyra Village, Malawi.

of the *Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act (H.R. 4188)*, a bill to double the current U.S.

commitment to voluntary family planning in developing countries from 2007 to 2011. The bipartisan legislation is co-sponsored by Reps. Jim Ramstad (R-MN), James Oberstar (D-MN) and Christopher Shays (R-CT).

The *Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act* will extend access to voluntary family planning to the poorest families in the poorest countries. The bill authorizes \$4 billion for the U.S. Agency for

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International Development (USAID) over five years, nearly doubling funding to support voluntary family planning, contraceptive procurement, logistical support, education, training, and distribution in developing countries. The bill also calls for greater integration between voluntary family planning programming and current HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care activities.

The Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act is important because:

- 120 million couples in the developing world would like to

postpone their next pregnancy, or have no more children, do not have access to or are not using modern contraception.

- 529,000 women died last year from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth with 99 percent of the deaths occurring in developing countries.
- Nearly 11 million children under the age of five die each year, frequently from low birth-weight, malnutrition or causes related to complications in the mother's pregnancy.
- For HIV-positive women, voluntary family planning is the most efficacious and cost-effective intervention to avoid the transmission of HIV from mother-to-child.



Photo courtesy of Rep. McCollum

On World AIDS Day, December 1, 2005, Rep. McCollum and Malawi's Foreign Minister Davies Katsonga visit the Mwanza AIDS Support Organization for people living with AIDS.